

IN THE CLAIMS:

Please cancel claims 1, 2, 5, 6, 10-12, 14, 17, 18, 20, 21, 25, and 26 without prejudice.

Please amend claims 7 and 8 as follows:

1-6. (Canceled)

7. (Currently Amended) ~~The A method of claim 1, further for classifying electronically posted documents, the method comprising:~~

receiving a first document and a second document;

generating a first metadata summary for said first document and a second metadata summary for the second document, wherein the first metadata summary includes a first plurality of sub-trees and the second metadata summary includes a second plurality of sub-trees, and wherein each of the sub-trees includes a plurality of nodes;

comparing the first and second metadata summaries on a structural level by comparing a structure of the sub-trees of the first metadata summary with a structure of the sub-trees of the second metadata summary;

identifying the first and second documents as distinct if the structures of the sub-trees of the first and second metadata summaries are not equivalent;

if the structures of the sub-trees of the first and second metadata summaries are equivalent, performing a further comparison of the first and second metadata summaries,

wherein the further comparison of the first and second metadata summaries includes the sub-steps of:

comparing the first and second metadata summaries on a textual level by comparing textual content from the first document that is contained in the sub-trees of the first metadata summary with textual content from the second document that is contained in the sub-trees of the second metadata summary; and

identifying the first and second documents as distinct if the textual content within the sub-trees of the first and second metadata summaries are not equivalent, wherein the method further comprises:

defining a first equivalence metadata table comprising:

a first row corresponding to the first metadata summary;
a second row corresponding to the second metadata summary;
a first column corresponding to the first metadata summary; and
a second column corresponding to the second metadata summary, and

wherein the step of identifying the first and second documents as distinct if the structures of the sub-trees of the first and second metadata summaries are not equivalent comprises storing a zero value in the first row and second column position of the first equivalence metadata table.

8. (Currently Amended) ~~The A method of claim 2, further for classifying electronically posted documents, the method~~ comprising:

receiving a first document and a second document;

generating a first metadata summary for said first document and a second metadata summary for the second document, wherein the first metadata summary includes a first plurality of sub-trees and the second metadata summary includes a second plurality of sub-trees, and wherein each of the sub-trees includes a plurality of nodes;

comparing the first and second metadata summaries on a structural level by comparing a structure of the sub-trees of the first metadata summary with a structure of the sub-trees of the second metadata summary;

identifying the first and second documents as distinct if the structures of the sub-trees of the first and second metadata summaries are not equivalent;

if the structures of the sub-trees of the first and second metadata summaries are equivalent, performing a further comparison of the first and second metadata summaries,

wherein the further comparison of the first and second metadata summaries includes the sub-steps of:

comparing the first and second metadata summaries on a textual level by

comparing textual content from the first document that is contained in the sub-trees of the first metadata summary with textual content from the second document that is contained in the sub-trees of the second metadata summary; and

identifying the first and second documents as distinct if the textual content within the sub-trees of the first and second metadata summaries are not equivalent,
wherein the further comparison of the first and second metadata summaries further includes the sub-steps of:

before comparing the first and second metadata summaries on a textual level,
comparing the first and second metadata summaries on an attribute level by comparing attribute values within the sub-trees of the first metadata summary with attribute values within the sub-trees of the second metadata summary; and

identifying the first and second documents as distinct if the attribute values within the sub-trees of the first and second metadata summaries are not equivalent,
wherein the method further comprises:

defining a first equivalence metadata table comprising:

- a first row corresponding to the first metadata summary;
- a second row corresponding to the second metadata summary;
- a first column corresponding to the first metadata summary; and
- a second column corresponding to the second metadata summary, and

wherein the step of identifying the first and second documents as distinct if the attribute values within the sub-trees of the first and second metadata summaries are not equivalent comprises storing a zero value in the first row and second column position of the first equivalence metadata table.

9. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 7,

wherein the step of identifying the first and second documents as distinct if the textual content within the sub-trees of the first and second metadata summaries are not equivalent comprises storing a zero value in the first row and second column position of the first equivalence metadata table.

10-26. (Canceled)